

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

March 13, 2008

1:30 p.m., MST

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Hearing Room 1 of the Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman

Dr. John Baracy

Mr. Jim DiCello

Dr. Eugene Garcia

Ms. Margaret Dugan

Ms. Johanna Haver

Ms. Eileen Klein

Ms. Karen Merritt

Absent:

Ms. Anna Rosas

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Review and discussion of the Alternate Proposed Models received prior to January 28, 2008

Mr. Alan Maguire stated that today the ELL Task Force would look at the proposed alternative SEI models received by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) before January 28, 2008. In a previous Task Force meeting, a procedure was drafted to handle proposals of alternative SEI models in a way to evaluate the points of the models and either accept or reject the alternative models. Department staff members have been working with districts regarding these proposed alternative models. Higley Unified School District was the furthest along, and Mr. Maguire asked if a representative from the district would be able to answer questions from the Task Force.

Ms. Adela Santa Cruz, Director, Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Office of English Language Acquisition Services (OELAS), spoke first, stating that she met with Ms. Heidi Larsen, the compliance grants manager who also works with ELL students at Higley USD. Their proposed alternate model is very similar to the model approved by the ELL Task Force but with minor modifications for their low incidence district. It complies with statute, including four

hours of ELD and time allocations per subject including conversation, grammar, and writing. The difference is in the grouping of ELLs. The proposed alternate model would allow groupings of K-3 for extremely low incidence schools. In grades 4-8, two hours would be spent with other ELL students, and two hours would be using Individual Language Learner Plans (ILLP).

Ms. Larsen stated that she was present to answer questions about the proposed alternate model from Task Force members. She added that the alternative model proposed by Higley met all the mandated standards of the Task Force, and that the only real difference was in the grouping strategy. Ms. Karen Merritt asked when older ELL students are in non-ELL classrooms, if there would be different levels of instruction. Ms. Larsen stated that yes there would be, using Title III funding if necessary. Ms. Merritt asked if this was already in practice, and Ms. Larsen stated that it was.

Mr. Maguire asked for the distribution of ELLs by grade. Ms. Larsen stated that the largest ELL population at any school in the district was 44 ELLs at a K-8 school. Usually the numbers range from approximately 25 to 37 ELLs per school. In the middle schools, there are fewer than 10 ELLs attending any individual school. Most ELLs are in the K-3 range and usually proficient by 3rd or 4th grade. At one school there is a 50% reclassification rate.

Ms. Johanna Haver asked if their old ELL program was similar to the model approved by the Task Force. Ms. Larsen stated that it was different. Before the SEI model was approved, they had ELL students in mainstream classrooms with academic support. Ms. Haver asked if the new model has been helpful. Ms. Larsen stated that it will be. Her district has engaged Mr. Kevin Clark in discussions of similar models in California, and a group of Higley teachers observed classroom practices at a California high school that uses a similar model. Higley USD plans to partner with the California high school in a research project, to share information and to identify lessons learned using the SEI model. Ms. Larsen stated she was very impressed with a first grade classroom she observed: the ELL students knew their present and past tense verbs, their test scores are steadily climbing, and now the mainstream English teachers are coming to the ELD classrooms to see what is being learned to expand learning for native English-speaking students. Higley USD plans to incorporate the five ELD guiding practices from this model school into their own practices.

Dr. Eugene Garcia asked about student AZELLA scores. Ms. Larsen stated that they have just received some results. Of 36 ELLs, 23 reclassified to Proficient, the rest advanced to Intermediate. At another school, there were three Pre-Emergent ELL students from Russia, two of whom have now moved into Basic, and one into Intermediate. Dr. Garcia asked if all 36 ELL students were new. Ms. Larsen stated that some were new, and some had been ELL students last year.

Ms. Larsen stated that, after working with ADE, her district has reworked the overlap idea that they presented during the last meeting. The district expects that teachers will be happier with the new class-within-a-class grouping strategy, with ELLs grouped by proficiency. Mr. Maguire asked for a grouping table showing distribution numbers because it would be helpful to edit the

model into something that other districts can use. He asked for more detail on how the groupings work and requested the rest of the model be completed so that the model can stand alone. Mr. Maguire stated that the Task Force has to write this alternative approach in a way that can be used by others. Dr. Garcia asked why the Task Force couldn't immediately vote to approve the model if the alternate model was compliant with the law. Mr. Maguire replied that there needs to be language in the alternative model to specify that this is for low-incidence districts only. Otherwise, any district could use it, regardless of size. This would go against the principle of grouping ELLs in ELL classrooms by proficiency. Dr. Garcia didn't understand why the size of a district should matter; if this is compliant, it is compliant. Mr. Maguire stated that different models will be in existence which may be tailored to different size districts and different needs. Ms. Larsen commented that it was her understanding that her model would be for low-incidence schools only, with 60 or fewer ELL students per school. Mr. Maguire agreed, but stated that in its current form the alternate proposed model is not a complete model. He wanted to review a complete model rather than a partial description of the points that differ from the current approved models.

Ms. Larsen commented that the revised version of the alternate proposed model was not significantly changed from the one presented at the last Task Force meeting. Mr. Maguire disagreed, stating that the earlier version grouped K-8 ELL students together in one classroom. Mr. Maguire stated that K-8 should only be grouped together in a single classroom in schools with an incidence of 16 or fewer ELL students.

3. Presentation and Discussion of SEI Fund Budget Request Application Process and Submissions

Mr. John Stollar, Associate Superintendent for Accountability at ADE, commented on the dialogue earlier in the meeting about the preparation of alternate models. ADE must be particular on the rules for submitting alternate models because the alternates, once approved by the ELL Task Force, become adoptable by any district. The goal is to be compliant with the law and also meet student needs at varying districts. For this to happen, a dialogue is necessary to discuss ideas with the Task Force. Ms. Eileen Klein asked if the district will take the next step to bring the alternate proposed model to the Task Force, or if the department will have this responsibility. Mr. Stollar stated that ADE's role is to assist districts in polishing their proposals to ready them for the Task Force. ADE will return the proposal to Higley USD with suggested language that the district can then approve or modify. The finished proposed alternate model will then be submitted to the Task Force and if approved, other districts will not need to ask the Task Force but will be able immediately to adopt the model. Mr. Maguire commented that they are establishing a procedure with the Higley model, which in his estimation has moved surprisingly fast. Other proposals may take more time to finalize.

Ms. Johanna Haver asked if the Task Force can accept an alternate model conditionally, or if they need to accept the whole alternate model. Mr. Alan Maguire stated that they need to have the complete model so that other districts can also use it if they fit the qualifications for the

alternate models. Dr. Eugene Garcia asked where in the law it states that the Task Force must generalize a model to be able to be duplicated by other districts. Mr. Maguire stated that by the end of the Task Force's activities, there will be several models, some for low-incidence districts and schools, some for high-incidence districts, etc. The Task Force can restrict the application of each model to the type of district whose needs it meets. Once approved by the Task Force, a proposed alternate model becomes an approved model that is no longer considered alternate. Therefore each model must be complete in its own language and specifications. He cautioned Dr. Garcia that they would be walking "with one foot on either side of the law," turning into practice what is a very prescriptive law that may not always be practical in the real world. The models will need to be as compliant as possible with statute. Some of the groupings may not be in the letter of the law, but in certain circumstances such as very low ELL incidence, they may have a practical use.

Dr. Garcia asked if the alternate then does not comply with the law. Mr. Stollar stated that the principle of the law is that, during the four hours of ELD, ELL students are not to be mixed with non-ELL students. There may need to be some adjustment to this principle in certain circumstances. The ILLP in the original model was a recognition that in certain circumstances one might need to mix ELL students in a non-ELL classroom due to low incidence. His assumption, looking at the proposed alternate models, was that they would include some principle being tweaked a little. Because any alternative model approved by the Task Force will be open for any like district to use, ADE will have to make the details clear so that any district will be able to take that model by itself and use it. Mr. Stollar pointed out another example where the law is stretched in the model approved by the Task Force, the allowance for Intermediate students who test proficient in reading and/or writing to opt out of those classes.

Ms. Haver asked what the Higley staff needs to include in their model revision. Mr. Maguire stated that they need specific descriptions of what is being taught in Reading and Writing for those blocks of time, and research to show the effectiveness of their methodology.

Mr. Stollar then addressed the budget process. He stated that his department adhered to the language that items covered in the ELL program budget were those "in addition" to normal student materials and curriculum. There were 249 submitted budget requests, 219 of which were approved. Of the 249, 17 were from charter schools with no ELLs and were rejected and thirteen budget requests from schools and districts dropped out after receiving rejections. More than half of the budget requests were submitted to ADE on the last day before ADE submitted budget requests to the Legislature. Mr. Stollar stated that his department was clear in stating that facilities expenses would not be covered in the budget process.

Mr. Stollar stated that items in budget requests were identified by category. ADE totaled the approved requests with Federal and State offsets and also the approved requests with State offsets only, as the use of offsets is still under litigation. The total approved request with Federal and State offsets is \$19,251,183.69, and the total approved request with State offsets only is \$40,653,833.30.

These figures were sent to the Legislature on February 29. Mr. Stollar then referred to a breakdown by district that detailed original requests, approved requests, and approved requests with both Federal and State offsets or approved requests with State offsets only, and the reported ELL count from 8/15/07.

Ms. Karen Merritt asked for a definition of incremental costs. Mr. Stollar stated that on the budget sheet there was a definition. The incremental costs are those required to implement the ELL program above and beyond costs normally associated with teaching a native English speaker. Ms. Merritt asked if costs above what is being asked for in the model that a school wants to use for its own program are included in incremental costs. Ms. Merritt asked for teacher training, for example. Mr. Stollar stated that yes, training was included. Ms. Merritt stated that she couldn't understand how a district could come down to zero dollars of incremental costs for the budget requests if items such as teacher training are included. Mr. Stollar stated that if a school or district has desegregation funds, these can offset the incremental costs of the ELL program. Ms. Merritt commented that this doesn't seem fair, as these funds are often already allocated.

Mr. Stollar stated the State never mandated interscholastic athletics programs. Districts choose how they spend their money. The law is clear concerning the budget allocation for the ELL program. The argument that there needs to be additional funding would have to be brought to the Legislature. There is a bill to fund the \$40 million amount at a House Appropriations committee meeting today. The Legislature is moving quickly on this.

Mr. Jim DiCello asked what the budget request projections were based upon. Mr. Stollar stated that he didn't want to omit those districts that did not complete their budget requests. He used the numbers of teachers and their salaries and required materials needed in order to derive projected incremental costs. ADE still wants to work with those districts to find a final number. He hopes that districts that submitted an alternate model will have similar incremental costs associated with their alternate models as their approved budget requests based on the Task Force approved models. The alternate models need to be cost effective--possibly even more cost effective than the Task Force approved models. The \$40 million is in addition to the weighted B dollars that districts would normally receive. Ms. Merritt asked if ADE can develop a summary showing the dollars requested by small, medium, and large districts, and charter schools. Ms. Haver asked if there were more costs in low-incidence vs. high-incidence schools. Mr. Stollar stated that he had not done the analysis, but as a rule, he and his staff believe that if there is low-incidence, it is a more costly situation because the class size formula indicates additional teachers are needed.

4. Presentation and Discussion of teacher certification requirements of the SEI Models

Mr. Alan Maguire discussed three areas of concern: (1) middle school teacher qualifications per the language in the Task Force approved models; (2) the variance between teacher endorsements

and certifications and how they interact with each other; and, (3) the applicability of this section of the SEI Models on charter schools, which may have different requirements than public school districts. Mr. Maguire plans to bring back to the Task Force one piece of clean-up language to address these issues. Mr. Maguire has attended meetings with ADE to learn more about these subjects.

Dr. Eugene Garcia asked what the issues were. Ms. Margaret Dugan stated that middle school teachers may have an elementary certification K-8 but still are required to have the Highly Qualified in their subject areas. She stated that as long as middle school teachers are Highly Qualified plus have passed the professional knowledge exam, they may have elementary school certifications and teach in the SEI program at the middle school level. They should not be restricted from teaching ELLs on the basis of not having secondary school certifications. The SEI Models need refining language to address this issue.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Training Program for School District Personnel on Structured English Immersion Models

Ms. Adela Santa Cruz provided an update on the training program. She referred to Attachment B materials that detailed the training activities of ADE. There were six objectives in Round II, including understanding the legal and historical context regarding English Language Development (ELD), understanding the aspects of the SEI program models, using AZELLA as a classroom tool, reviewing definitions of ELD and the role of the Discrete Skills Inventory (DSI) and the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) in the implementation of ELD instruction, and presenting instructional strategies to use during the required four hours of ELD. The training packet also included the three-day agenda and a table of the number of teachers already trained and those estimated to be trained through May.

From the 20 districts with the highest incidence of ELLs, 1,920 teachers participated in the Round II training. The 20 top districts will partner with ADE to help train teachers from other districts. The total estimate through May is 4,105 teachers. By the end of the school year, more than 6000 teachers will have gone through the training. The evaluation of the training sessions has been good.

Ms. Johanna Haver commented that a teacher she knew who normally hates teacher training courses had high praise for Ms. Santa Cruz. Dr. Eugene Garcia asked if the goal of the training was for teachers to go out and be able to implement the training. He had heard from teachers good overviews of the training but that not enough knowledge was given to implement the program. Ms. Santa Cruz stated that the goal was to give teachers enough information to implement the program, but it was not designed to tell them how to teach. Mr. Maguire commended Ms. Santa Cruz for her efforts handling the training of the models and ELD.

6. Presentation and Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Activities

Mr. Alan Maguire expected that in upcoming meetings the Task Force will hear about several more alternate proposed models and hoped they will be able to vote on adopting or rejecting some of these proposed models. He also expected to hear more about progress of the legislative deliberations concerning SEI Models funding, to learn more about the teacher certification issue, and to receive an update on how the training continues.

Mr. Maguire commented that as a long time observer of the legislature, without the work of this Task Force, he thought it was very unlikely that funding of this amount in this way would be under consideration by the legislature at this time. It is thanks to the efforts of the Task Force that such progress has been made. He recognized the time spent by members of the Task Force and their diligence.

Dr. Eugene Garcia asked Mr. Stollar about the rubric ADE is using to evaluate the alternative models. Mr. Stollar stated that ADE is using the rubric, which outlines necessary components according to statute, as a tool to help districts prepare their proposed alternate models to bring before the Task Force. Dr. Garcia stated that one item is not on the rubric which was under discussion today: replicability, the ability for someone else to use the same model. He had not been aware this would be a factor in an alternative model. He asked for a discussion on this draft if it is being used by ADE to evaluate proposed alternate models. Mr. Maguire commented that he did think a model could be so unique to the circumstances of the district that it would not be able to be replicated. He would not consider an inability to replicate a model for more than one instance to be a basis upon which to reject a model.

Ms. Margaret Dugan stated that the draft was created because consistency in the formats of the models submitted is essential so that ADE can monitor the district by its particular model. Dr. Garcia stated that he didn't want to use a double standard, with one standard for the Task Force's model, and another one for alternative models. He sees things in the rubric which were not discussed by the Task Force in the adoption of their model.

7. Call to the Public

A call to the public was made at 2:57 p.m. The first speaker was Ms. Donna Lewis, Associate Superintendent for the Phoenix Elementary School District. She thanked the Task Force for their service and recognizes the progress they will make with students. She wanted to raise awareness of certain issues for future meetings. She noted that they are required to sign a declaration of assurance that they are teaching all of the Arizona Standards to all of the students. Ms. Lewis encourages the Task Force to develop a pathway to waive addressing all of the standards of the curriculum because there is a cost when four hours are spent exclusively on English language development. This declaration of assurance, which must be signed by districts, she would like to have modified on behalf of ELL students.

There is also a language order in some of the desegregation order schools which requires mixed groupings. They may need to look at these orders to ensure districts are not breaking one or both laws in the grouping of ELL students.

Third, as the Gifted ADE team is determining how to roll out access services for the special education and ELL students who are worthy and deserving of gifted education, formats are being developed for access for those students. Ms. Lewis wants to ensure that these four hours of ELD are not taking away opportunities from their gifted or special education students.

Last, she asked that ADE post on its website their nuts and bolts points from their training sessions, and what range of numbers is considered a high- or low-incidence school.

8. Discussion of future meetings

The next scheduled Task Force meeting is on April 10.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Jim DiCello moved to adjourn. Ms. Margaret Dugan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman